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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 TEL AVIV 006875

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E.O. 12958: DECL: 12/09/2015

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SUBJECT: MOFAZ TELLS A/S WELCH HE WILL SHUT KARNI, EREZ IF

PA DOES NOT IMPLEMENT NOVEMBER 15 AGREEMENT

Classified By: Ambassador Richard H. Jones for reasons 1.4 (b,d).

11. (C) Summary: Defense Minister Shaul Mofaz told NEA A/S Welch and the Ambassador December 9 that the Palestinian Authority (PA) has done nothing to implement the Agreement on Movement and Access since both sides met with the Secretary November 15. He underscored repeatedly that security concerns and the current political climate will compel him to turn Karni and Erez into "international crossings" by Sunday, December 11, if the PA does not fully implement the agreement. A/S Welch concurred that the PA had not implemented the agreement satisfactorily, but progress is steady; he asked that before making any decision on Sunday, Mofaz take into consideration technological improvements that the EU continues to make to comply with the agreement. Welch also said remaining GOI concerns would be addressed.

12. (C) Summary cont. Mofaz also charged that the PA has not taken meaningful actions against the Palestinian Islamic Jihad (PIJ), even though, Mofaz asserted, PA President Mahmud Abbas "has the power to deal with the PIJ." Mofaz expressed concern that Syria will support an escalation in Hizballah activity along the Israel-Lebanon border to detract attention from the release of the Mehlis Report next week. Mofaz expressed concern that the PIJ and Hamas could become stronger after the January Palestinian Legislative Council elections, buttressed by continued smuggling into Gaza of arms from Egypt. A/S Welch agreed that the PIJ is a serious concern, noted that the PA has taken some actions against that terrorist group, and added that if PIJ is being directed and funded externally, it may be beyond PA control. Welch underlined the importance that the PLC elections be as free and open as possible. End Summary.

13. (C) A/S Welch and the Ambassador were accompanied by DCM Cretz, Pol/C Olsen, Econ/C Weinstein, Col. Mark Dugger (USSC), and Embassy notetaker Bernstein-Zabza. Mofaz was joined by MOD Pol-Mil Director Amos Gilad and Mofaz's Chief of Staff Brig. General Eitan Dangot.

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Mofaz: "I Won't Take Any Risks After Sunday."  
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14. (C) Defense Minister Mofaz began the meeting with A/S Welch December 9 by charging that the PA has "implemented nothing, but nothing," of the November 15 Agreement on Movement and Access. In contrast, Mofaz asserted, the GOI has made good on its commitments under the agreement, opening Karni and Erez, and increasing the number of Palestinian workers crossing into Israel. Mofaz complained that the PA is not conveying real-time information and image feed to the GOI at Rafah, thereby putting Israelis at risk. The PA could easily improve the technology to comply with the agreement in a day, Mofaz charged, and characterized the PA's failure to comply as lack of "good will." The PA, he asserted, is "playing games with us." Mofaz, in a clearly agitated state, continued that "three and a half weeks after we sat with the Secretary...and the PA side has done nothing, and they

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continue to attack us... No other country would be as patient." Mofaz also asserted that "blacklisted persons" were entering Gaza from Egypt, including Al Qaeda elements. "This is an unacceptable situation," Mofaz underscored.

15. (C) Mofaz said that on Sunday, December 11, he intends to assess the situation, and, if PA noncompliance continues, to make "deep inspections" at the Karni and Erez crossings, and convert them to international passages, unless and until the PA conforms with the agreement. After the Netanya and Hadera terrorist attacks, Mofaz stressed, he, as Defense Minister, could not take risks with Israeli lives. He said that Prime Minister Sharon has deferred to Mofaz's judgment in how to respond to the PA's noncompliance. Mofaz said that Welch's presence in Israel at this time is "critical" to conveying the severity of the situation. Mofaz asked for a read-out of Welch's meetings with the PA before Welch leaves on December 10 to help inform Mofaz's decision on Karni and Erez.

16. (C) A/S Welch stressed that while the USG is also not satisfied with the PA's level of compliance with the agreement, the PA is making improvements and there has been real progress. He said that in the late morning December 8, with support from the EU as well as Egypt, data transmission

and image feed at Rafah was transmitted fully and more effectively and that most of the GOI's concerns were being addressed. Welch said that in a morning meeting, EU Special Representative to the Middle East Peace Process Marc Otte indicated that the EU was assisting the PA to address GOI concerns. Welch said it would be preferable if the GOI could stay on schedule with the November 15 agreement deadline as the PA continues to address GOI concerns. Dangot acknowledged that the PA had decreased the data and image transmission time from eight minutes to two-to-three minutes. Dangot added, however, that while the PA is improving operations at Rafah, it is not implementing the agreement "at the level we agreed." Gilad added that the Haj pilgrimage will soon start, a time during which recruitment of terrorists increases, making transmittal of pictures and data at Rafah even more critical. Welch committed to convey in his meeting with PA officials that the USG expects the PA to live up to the agreement. Welch said remaining Israeli concerns would be fixed.

17. (C) Note: Mofaz appeared not to have been briefed on the most recent improvements in the quality and speed of data transmission in Rafah. Mofaz turned to Gilad and Dangot during the meeting and asked in Hebrew about the situation and Gilad again noted the decrease in transmission time down to two-to-three minutes. End note.

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PIJ and Hizbollah  
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18. (C) Mofaz charged that PA President Abbas "could do more against PIJ" since it is a small, extremist group, with an insignificant public base. He claimed that Abbas knows where PIJ is located and "has the power to deal" with it. He recounted the GOI's recent activity against PIJ in the West Bank and against Qassam rocket attacks coming from Gaza. Mofaz assessed that the PIJ is receiving orders and funding from Syria. Mofaz expressed concern that Syria would escalate Hizballah attacks along the Israel-Lebanon border to distract international attention from the anticipated release of the Mehlis Report next week. Welch underlined that the PA can and should deal with PIJ, but added that if PIJ is also directed from outside PA, this places PIJ to a certain extent beyond the reach of the PA. He said that the USG is also addressing the problem of Hizballah activity, adding that the U.S. is looking to Lebanon to exercise greater control over its territory.

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Fatah Elections  
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19. (C) The PA, Mofaz charged, is not acting against terrorist activity in and Qassam rocket attacks from Gaza in the run-up to the January 25, 2006 PLC elections. As a result, terrorist groups will be more powerful after the elections, Mofaz asserted. He claimed that smuggling of weapons, including anti-aircraft missiles, across the border with Egypt continues, although he acknowledged that Egypt is making its "best effort" to prevent smuggling.

10. (U) NEA A/S Welch cleared this message.

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